

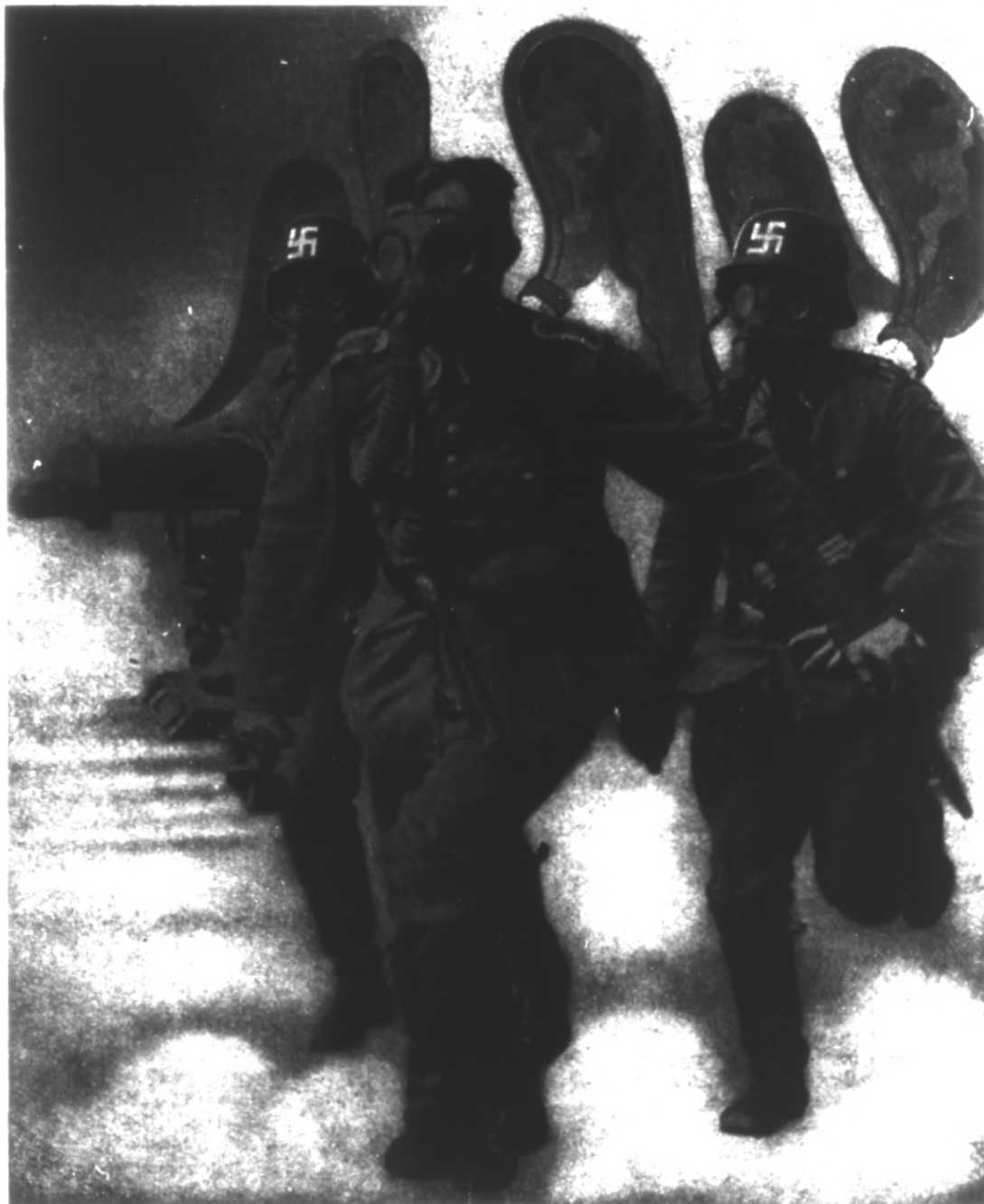
DEMOCRATIC GERMAN REPORT

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A 1933 WARNING THAT FITS TODAY: HISTORIC PHOTOMONTAGE BY JOHN HEARTFIELD



**WEHRMACHT SOLDIERS MAY BE ANGELS
BUT THEIR WINGS ARE CAMOUFLAGED**

Our Cover

The photomontage on the cover of this issue is up-to-the-minute in its impact, following the introduction of conscription to a new Wehrmacht in West Germany, but it is by no means new.

It was first published nearly 23 years ago, on October 26th 1933 in "AIZ", a weekly illustrated magazine published in Prague by German anti-fascists who had been forced to emigrate by the Nazi terror.

It was first published at a time when some people in Europe — all too few — realised that Hitler's coming to power in Germany meant that the German militarists were in the saddle again; and that this in its turn meant that German jackboots would soon trample across Europe unless something was done to stop it.

This photomontage was made by John Heartfield, leading German anti-fascist artist, who invented the photomontage method in 1916, and who became famous in the 1920's for his brilliant photographic political caricatures.

Today John Heartfield lives and works in the German Democratic Republic; in one of the coming issues GERMAN REPORT will publish further samples of the work of this great artist who for the past forty years has been in the forefront of the fight against fascism and war.

Black Flags and Strikes Against Conscription

Demonstrations against the new West German Conscription Law were reported from many parts of West Germany in the second week of July.

In Juelich, a town almost entirely destroyed in the Second World War, railway repair shop workers staged a four-hour protest strike on July 10th in protest against the new Wehrmacht, and in particular against the fact that the West German War Ministry plans to take over the repair shop. Black flags of protest were hoisted over the railway yard.

A black flag also marked the protest in Sigmaringen. It was hoisted on the church tower by Pastor Manfred Stohrer, one of the 104 Protestant clergy who signed a strong protest against the introduction of conscription a few weeks ago.

"THE FIRST STEP TO WAR"

Bertolt Brecht on Call-Up Law

Bertolt Brecht, great German dramatist, appealed to the West German Parliament in an open letter on July 2nd not to pass the conscription law. Brecht's letter stated:

"Allow me, as a writer, to give my views on the frightening question of the reintroduction of conscription.

"When I was a young man there was conscription in Germany, and a war was started, a war which was lost. Conscription was abolished; but as a grown man I saw it introduced again, and a second war begun, greater than the first. Germany lost it again, and more thoroughly, and conscription was abolished again. Those who had introduced it and who could be caught were hanged by a world court. Now, on the threshold of old age, I hear that conscription should be introduced for a third time.

"Against whom is the third war planned? Against the French? Against Poles? Against English?

Against Russians? Or against Germans?

"We are living in the atomic age: twelve divisions cannot win a war — but they could begin it. And if there is conscription, how long will there only be twelve divisions?

"Do you really want to take the first step, the first step to war? The last step, the step into nothing, will then be taken by all of us.

"All of us know that there are peaceful chances for reunification: but only peaceful chances. We are divided by a trench: shall it be fortified? War put us apart: war cannot reunite us.

"Neither of our parliaments, however elected, has been charged or permitted by the population to introduce conscription.

"Since I am against war, I am against the introduction of conscription in both halves of Germany, and since this is a question of life and death, I propose that a plebiscite should be held on the subject in both parts of Germany."

EUROPE'S SECOND BIGGEST MACHINE EXPORTER

The German Democratic Republic is now the second largest exporter of machinery in the Socialist half of the world, Deputy Prime Minister Heinrich Rau announced in Berlin on June 18th. Machines are exported not only to other socialist countries, but also to highly industrialised countries such as Britain.

Machinery exports already form the largest part of the exports from the Republic (over 60% in 1955), but the proportion will be increased to 67% by 1960, Minister Rau announced. Total exports will be nearly doubled between 1955 and 1960 if the targets set by the Second Five Year Plan are fulfilled.

As a result of climbing exports, imports can also be greatly increased. Not only necessities such as wool and cotton will be imported in much greater quantities, but also semi-luxuries such as cocoa and coffee, which are still in short supply and very expensive in Democratic Germany. Coffee imports will be nearly quadrupled by 1960, according to the

plan, and cocoa imports will be nearly doubled.

SS Officers in West Berlin Police

A number of former high-ranking officers of the Nazi black-uniformed SS now occupy leading positions in the West Berlin police force, it was disclosed early in July.

They include:

SS Obersturmfuehrer Werner Menzel, today chief of the detective department, Tiergarten district.

SS Hauptsturmfuehrer Paul Sperber, former Gestapo official, today chief of the detective department, Wilmersdorf district.

Hans Jueterbog, former personal guard to SS Chief Heinrich Himmler, today leading officer in the West Berlin political police.

SS Sturmbannfuehrer Togotzes, today head of the West Berlin homicide department.

SS Hauptsturmfuehrer Bruno Relchert and Heinz Mueller, today leading official in the central West Berlin detective department.

CALL-UP IN WEST GERMANY . . .

The first conscripts for the new West German Wehrmacht will be called up this year, just 21 years after the first conscripts were called up to the old Hitlerite Wehrmacht.

This was announced in Bonn on July 7th, immediately after the West German Parliament had approved the Conscription Law, in the face of

strong opposition from Social Democrats and other parties.

The conscription debate ended in the early hours of July 7th, with 270 members of the Adenauer coalition voting for conscription, 166 members of the Social Democratic and Refugee parties voting against, and 20 members of the Free Democratic Party abstaining.

The regular call-up period has not

yet been fixed. It is expected to be for an eighteen-month term of service, but military advisers to the Bonn Government, including war criminal Field Marshal Mannstein, are pressing for a two-year term. The first conscripts to be called up will be young men born in 1937, who were only eight when the former Wehrmacht crashed to defeat in 1945.

... SO "COME EAST, YOUNG MAN!"

All young Germans threatened with conscription into the new West German Wehrmacht can come to the German Democratic Republic to find peaceful construction work instead of being called up for army service, the Government of the German Democratic Republic announced on July 11th.

The government announcement was issued on July 11th, five days after the West German Parliament had passed the conscription law under which all men between the ages of 20 and 45 can be called up for an undefined period of military service in the new Wehrmacht, which is commanded by old Hitlerite generals.

The manifesto, jointly signed by the Government of the German Democratic Republic and the National Front, the all-party coalition of Democratic Germany, stated in part:

"On March 16th 1935, Hitler introduced conscription to Germany. This was a big step towards war, and to the fateful national catastrophe for the German people.

"On July 7th 1956 the Bonn Government coalition, in opposition to the clearly expressed will of the overwhelming majority of the German people, pushed the conscription law through parliament. The Bonn War Minister has already announced the first call-up for men born in 1937.

"This step was taken by the Adenauer Government after the Government of the German Democratic Republic had not only made proposals for joint rejection of conscription, for the limitation of armed forces in East and West Germany, for the withdrawal of occupation troops, and for an understanding between the two German governments, but had also taken a number of steps in this direction.

"In the whole world the signs of a general relaxation of tension have been welcomed; and just at this time Adenauer introduces conscription to continue the cold war and his bankrupt 'policy of strength'. Hitler's fateful path is being taken once again. This is a great danger to the German people and for other European nations in the East and the West.

"History teaches that militarism and democracy cannot be reconciled. The Bonn NATO army is headed by the same forces who overthrew the Weimar Republic, and who were the military props of the Hitlerite dictatorship.

"The introduction of conscription by the Bonn war parties is a blow against the international relaxation of tension; it is a blow against the peaceful reunification of Germany; it is a blow against democracy and the social rights of the workers; it is a threat to hundreds of thousands of West German families.

"The Government of the German Democratic Republic and the National Council of the National Front appeal, in this serious situation, to all young people in West Germany who are directly threatened by the call-up, and calls on them to turn their backs on the Bonn military dictatorship.

"The threatened young people of West Germany will be given every help in the German Democratic Republic, so that they can work in peace for the peaceful construction of their homeland. The Government of the German Democratic Republic has announced that it will not introduce conscription. Every young person in West Germany is invited to see for himself that the German Democratic Republic provides a homeland for German youth.

"We also appeal to those young people who for various reasons have left our Republic, and who are now threatened by the conscription law in West Germany. They should return to their families in the German Democratic Republic and work for their peaceful future. Their mothers and fathers should do all they can to get these young people to return.

"The Government of the German Democratic Republic, and the National Council of the National Front have full confidence in the German working class and the other peace-loving democratic forces in West Germany. These forces will show a decisive will for peace as a reply to the militarist deeds of Bonn. The proposals made by the Government of the German Democratic Republic have shown the entire German people the road to relaxation of tension and to peaceful understanding. These proposals deserve the support of all Germans."

SOCIALIST "END CALL-UP" VOTE

West German Social Democrats Want East-West Talks, Security Pact

Conscription to the new Wehrmacht must be abolished, and West Germany must revise its relations with the NATO, the West German Social Democratic Party decided at its party congress held in Munich from June 10th to 15th.

The 388 elected delegates to the conference voted unanimously in favour of a resolution stating:

"The aim of the Social Democratic Party is to change radically the false foreign policy and defence policy, to revise its present treaty obligations in agreement with its treaty partners, and to annul the conscription law."

The acceptance of this resolution means that the Social Democratic Party intends to make the fight against conscription one of the main planks of its platform for the general election due in West Germany next year.

Another resolution passed unanimously by the party congress called for the creation of a collective security system in Europe. This resolution stated in part: "For this purpose the (West German) Federal Government must influence the great powers to revise the Paris Pact (binding West Germany to NATO) and the Warsaw Pact (binding East Germany to the East European Defence Block), so that both parts of Germany may be simultaneously released from their military obligations. Such a new foreign policy can provide the basis for an understanding between the four powers, so that a reunited Germany can be created, which would participate with equal rights and duties in this European Security Pact."

The congress also called for a reduction of the numbers of foreign troops stationed in Germany; the fixing of a maximum figure for the armed forces to be maintained in both halves of Germany; and normal diplomatic and trade relations with the Soviet Union and East European countries.

Many delegates to the congress called for direct negotiations between the West German Government and the Government of the German Democratic Republic on questions affecting Germany as a whole, but the majority of delegates still rejected such negotiations, though they approved all other measures designed to bring the two halves of Germany nearer together.

The official congress resolution on the subject of relations with the German Democratic Republic stated that no direct talks could be held at governmental level until a government was constituted in East Germany "as a result of general, secret and direct elections". The resolution continued:

"The Social Democratic Party supports legislative and administrative action by both sides in Germany to lower the barriers dividing us... The greatest possible freedom shall be allowed for all-German traffic and exchange... and both sides must agree not to use these exchanges for military and economic espionage". The resolution urged the creation of technical all-German organisations in various fields of transport and trade, and a large scale exchange of students, professors and technical literature between the two parts of Germany. (These Social Democratic proposals resemble very closely proposals put forward by Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov on February 17th 1954 at the Berlin Conference, and rejected out of hand by the western powers.)

In another resolution the Social Democrats stressed that the reunification of Germany could not mean that one half of Germany was simply "incorporated" in the other. Reunification could not be allowed to mean that nationalised factories in East Germany were returned to private ownership, or that farms were taken away from the peasants and returned to the big landlords.

The congress re-elected Erich Ollenhauer as chairman by a big majority.

In his key-note speech to the congress Erich Ollenhauer called for the replacement of the Adenauer Government in West Germany by a new grouping which would have as its aims international understanding, the guarantee of democratic rights, and the provision of social security. He rejected direct talks between the East and West German Governments, but thought that much could be done to bring the two halves of Germany nearer together. The London "Times" of July 12th, reporting this passage from Ollenhauer's speech stated: "The speech was generally well received, but few delegates applauded, as they were expected to do, when he declared that there would be no negotiations with the East German Government. Herr Ollenhauer was clearly avoiding here an inevitable consequence of party policy as it has been evolving, and ignoring some views in the constituency parties and the executive".

A message of greetings was sent to the Social Democratic Party Congress by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. "If the workers of East and West Germany, and their parties, unite their efforts in the struggle for peace and democracy, then they will undoubtedly be successful in reuniting their homeland, and leading the whole of Germany towards freedom and progress" the message stated. The message of greetings was not read to the Congress, and Social Democratic leaders said that no reply would be sent.

Win a New Reader

Fill in the name and address of a friend, work-mate or acquaintance on the form below, and send it to

Democratic German Report
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Berlin W 8, Germany

We shall be pleased to mail sample copies of the paper to him or her.

Name

Address

M. P.s AIR PROS & CONS AFTER EAST GERMAN TRIP

Social Security Praised: Lack of Opposition Criticised

A party of British members of parliament who had just concluded a one-week two thousand mile tour of the German Democratic Republic met journalists in Berlin of July 16th to report their impressions.

The M.P.s, who stressed that they were not an official delegation, and not guests of the Government of the German Democratic Republic, had toured the country on the invitation of the International Conference for the Peaceful Solution of the German Question.

Answering press questions the M.P.s, who each spoke individually and not in the name of the delegation, praised factors in the life in Democratic Germany which had impressed them favourably and criticised shortcomings.

The parliamentarians stated they were favourably impressed by standards of living and social services, but criticised apparent lack of personal freedom and the lack of an organised opposition.

Jack Jones, M.P. for Rotherham, said: "When you meet the people of East Germany in the shop, the street and the factories they appear to be fairly well clothed and reasonably well fed. But it is an entirely different matter how he thinks, and that is not reflected in his personal appearance."

"On the welfare side, I have seen a development of welfare which cannot be exceeded in any part of the world which I have visited, and I have visited most parts."

"The German Democratic Republic is concentrating on industrial welfare rather than on wages, and without any doubt the Republic is concentrating a tremendous effort on children and youth. However, I cannot see how the indoctrination of youth with the ideas of the East is going to help the reunification of Germany."

Asked what other factors he found to criticise in Democratic Germany, Mr Jones said: "I hate like hell to see men with tommy-guns moving about amongst people at work; I don't like to see old women working hard in the fields, though I know it is necessary; what I don't like most of all is the absolute lack of the right to oppose the government at the highest level in free elections."

William Stones, M.P. for Consett, Durham, told journalists that before

coming to East Germany he had heard all sorts of stories, good and bad. "I must say that the worst stories which I had heard have proved to be without confirmation. I was pleased to see that the standard of living was so high, considering the economic situation as it was at the end of the war. I have gained the impression that morale was better than I had thought."

William Griffiths, M.P. for Moss Side, Manchester, stated: "I came to East Germany expecting to find things grimmer than I have in fact found them. Judging from appearances, clothes and general bearing, I would say the people here look very much like the people I represent in Manchester."

William Blyton, M.P. for Houghton-le-Spring, Durham, reported on the three-hour talk which the members of the party had had with Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl and Deputy Prime Minister Walter Ulbricht, two of the leading members of the Socialist Unity Party. He said that the

questions of reunification, and of a possible later neutralisation of Germany had been discussed. In addition, the Labour M.P.s raised the question of political prisoners in the German Democratic Republic, including Social Democrats. Mr Blyton quoted Prime Minister Grotewohl as saying that 18,000 prisoners, who might broadly be described as political prisoners, had recently been released. Those released included 691 Social Democrats. Mr Blyton stated that Prime Minister Grotewohl had assured them that there were now no political prisoners in the German Democratic Republic.

Summing up the results of the visit Arthur Lewis, M.P. for West Ham North, stressed that they had been able to go where they liked, and speak to whom they liked, often without having to use interpreters or official guides. They had been impressed by the genuine desire for peace and friendship expressed by everyone from the humblest worker to the highest officials in the state.

OPEN LETTER TO SOCIAL DEMOCRATS "Let's Try Cooperation"

Leaders of the Socialist Unity Party from East Germany should meet with leaders of the West German Social Democratic Party to discuss ways and means of improving the situation in Germany. This was the proposal made on July 7th in a letter addressed by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party to the Social Democratic Party Congress meeting in Munich.

The letter proposed that the following steps should be taken as soon as possible:

1. Leaders of both parties should meet to discuss measures to be taken to maintain peace, to ensure disarmament, the relaxation of tension in Germany and the achievement of a collective security system in Europe.

2. Delegations from the two parties should visit the other half of Germany to investigate on the spot working and living conditions, and the economic and state systems.

3. Party meetings should be held in both halves of Germany at which

representatives of the two parties could put forward their views on measures to end the cold war and ways to reunite Germany.

The letter frankly admitted that in the past there had been big differences between the two parties, but stressed that both parties had as their aim the achievement of socialism, and the struggle against big business bosses, fascism and militarism.

"The Social Democrats, the Communist Party, and the Socialist Unity Party have at present, to a very large extent, similar views on the steps which should be taken to ensure peace" the letter stated. "We therefore suggest all workers' organisations and the entire population should discuss the proposals which we have worked out. These proposals are:

1. Both German states should reject the introduction of conscription.

2. Both German states should reach agreement on the limitation of armed forces, and should oppose the stationing of atomic weapons in Germany.

3. The German working class parties should join in calling for a zone of limited armaments in Europe, and for general disarmament.

4. The German working class parties should join in opposing militarism and fascism, and call for the prohibition of all such organisations.

5. The German working class should join in calling for discussions between the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic."

The Socialist Unity Party letter then answered questions which have sometimes been raised by West

German Social Democrats. "Social Democratic officials ask us whether we think that the same path should be taken in West Germany as has been taken in the German Democratic Republic. We reply: Our path began with the overthrow of Hitlerite fascism, at a time when the big capitalists were powerless. You, in West Germany are in a completely different situation, since the big capitalists, the financial magnates and the big estate owners are back in power. Your path to a new social order can therefore not be the same as that which we took . . .

"The first step would be to organise a really broad popular mo-

vement against conscription in West Germany and in favour of the democratic reunification of Germany.

"The next step would be to defeat the Adenauer Party at the next general election (in 1957). This defeat could open the way to a government which would break with the present militarist and reactionary policy . . .

"Today we have reached a turning point. What is done today can be decisive for generations to come. We shall be able to bring about a change when we unite to fight the reactionary forces, the forces of yesterday."

U. S. SPIES RECRUIT TEEN-AGERS

The American espionage organisation Military Intelligence Department in West Berlin is now recruiting hundreds of teenagers from East Germany to work as spies, it was disclosed in East Berlin on July 12th.

The young people are picked up on the streets of West Berlin, and bullied or bribed into giving some information. They are then blackmailed into continuing to work for the Intelligence Department, a spokesman of the State Security organisation of the German Democratic Republic announced.

The announcement was made at a press conference at which journal-

ists heard the stories of fourteen of these young "spies" recently apprehended by the State Security Service. At the conclusion of the press conference 13 of the 14 young men, mostly aged between 17 and 20, were released on their promise to reform their ways. The spokesman of the State Security Service announced that nearly 100 further teen-age spies had surrendered voluntarily in recent weeks, and all been sent home without punishment. "Anyone else who has been recruited by the Military Intelligence Department, and who surrenders voluntarily to the authorities, will be released without punishment" the spokesman stated.

Experimental Theatre for Berlin

The People's Theatre on the Luxemburg Platz in East Berlin has just completed the equipment of a small experimental theatre on the third floor of the house, where new plays by contemporary dramatists are to be tried out.

Actors, producers and stage and costume artists will be young enthusiasts and the house itself is to be decorated by rising young artists and sculptors.

The theatre, which is called the "Third Floor Theatre", seats 110, has its own dressing-rooms, refreshment room and foyer and a separate entrance. Tickets are all low-priced, at 2, 3 and 4 marks.

Opening day will be August 31st and the first two new plays will be "Bessie Bosch" by Johannes Wuesten and "Ten Years Later" by Guenther Rueckert.

CRIME RATE SINKING

The crime rate in the German Democratic Republic is only one fifth of the rate in West Germany, and is still sinking, according to official statistics published in Berlin.

Only 603 indictable offences per 100,000 inhabitants were registered by the police in Democratic Germany in 1955, a big fall from the 1954 figure of 703. In West Germany, police registered 3018 indictable offences per 100,000 of the population

in 1955, a considerable increase from the 1954 figure of 2910.

The new statistics show that the crime rate in Democratic Germany is already well below the crime rate in Britain, which was approximately 900 indictable offences per 100,000 of the population in 1953.

Detailed statistics for different classes of offence made known to the police in East and West Germany are given below:

Crime	Indictable offences per 100,000 inhabitants	
	East Germany	West Germany
Murder and manslaughter	0.5	2
Robbery with violence	1	7
Theft	256	1105
Fraud, forgery etc.	37	440
Embezzlement	36	126
Sexual crimes	38	109

Democratic Germany in International Atom Institute

Democratic Germany is one of the founder members of the International Atomic Research Institute to be established in the Soviet Union, it was announced in Moscow on July 12th. The equipment of the institute will include a vast proton synchrotron with a planned energy of ten thousand million electron volts. The cost of running the institute will be shared by the member states, which include the Soviet Union and China. The Democratic Republic will bear nearly 7% of the cost.

The Moscow announcement stated that other states could join in the work of the institute if their admission was approved by a majority of the founder members.

Eleven Years Later in West Germany

By Regina Bohne

The bell rang. The neighbour's son, a high-school boy with an open, intelligent face, stood in the door-way.

"Have you something for me to read?" he asked.

"Of course, but have you got through all your comics already?"

The boy laughed. "You've guessed it. My friend hasn't turned up and I haven't enough money for the cinema."

"So that's it! Well, just find yourself something in the book-case."

There was silence for some minutes. The boy looked first at eye level, where the books on Marxism, Communism, the USSR, from Karl Marx to Monnerot, stood. But his gaze shifted to the shelf above, to the books on sociology, psychology and social psychology, and then away again.

Now he bent down to look at the lower shelves packed full with classical literature. He turned away with a helpless look.

"I can't find anything interesting. Haven't you any interesting novels? It doesn't matter what kind."

"Of course. There are a couple of interesting novels over there to the left, next to the German concentration camp books."

"I never heard of those before. Are there such books?" The boy knit his brows. "H'm, those would be interesting. Which are they?"

"Here, these five books."

"I'll take one of those with me — this one, it's not so thick as the others."

It was a book published in Hamburg in 1948: "The Doors Open. Authentic Report on English Assistance in Belsen. With Official Photographs and Memo by Rudolf Kuestermeyer." The author, Derrick Sington, is a journalist in civil life and was a first lieutenant in the British Army in 1945.

The next day, Monday afternoon, he came again, with the book in his hand.

"What, have you finished it already?"

An embarrassed look — then in a low voice: "No, I haven't read it at all. I didn't get so far." He stopped, deeply embarrassed, then added quickly:

"My father does not allow me to read it. He says it's all terribly exaggerated; and the pictures are of course not genuine. And for a boy who wasn't even in school in 1945 the

book is absolutely unsuitable. He says such books ought simply to be forbidden today, because they only poison the air!"

"Oh, indeed?"

"Don't you think so too?" he asked.

"No, I'm of exactly opposite opinion."

"H'm". The boy did not know what to say.

"You think a lot of your father's opinion in any case, don't you?"

"Oh no, I don't always agree with him by any means. But in this case..."

"Do you feel sure he's right in this case?"

"Yes, in this case I do think so. But do you really believe that everything in this book is true? I only read the first twenty pages; my father simply took the book away from me and gave it to my mother. She told me to bring it back to you. Do you really believe all that?"

"Do I believe it? I know that it was exactly like that in Belsen, in Sachsenhausen and in Auschwitz and in many other camps everywhere in Europe where Hitler was in control."

"You know that? But you weren't there, were you?"

"No, of course not."

The boy turned the book over in an embarrassed way, then put it back in its old place between "The SS State" and "Under Strange Stars".

Then, cheerfully and as if relieved, he asked:

"Perhaps I can choose a novel after all. What's this? 'Jew Suess' by Feuchtwanger; perhaps I could read that?"

"I'm not quite sure" I answered. "It's a great historical novel. The hero is a Jew who lived in Stuttgart hundreds of years ago and played an important role there. The author is a Jew too; he had to leave Germany in 1933".

"Oh, that's a pity. I like historical stories, too. But if my old man found me with it..."

"What would he do?" I asked.

"I really don't know. But in any case I'm quite certain he wouldn't like to see me reading a book written by a Jew."

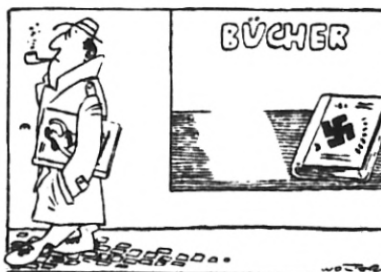
Silence. Then: "Such a pity I couldn't find anything suitable", the boy said as he took his leave.

(from "Frankfurter Hefte", West German literary magazine, June 1956)

Through W. German Eyes



"Hm... endangering youth morals..."



... It must be confiscated

(from "Welt der Arbeit", West Germany)

"Nathan" Banned

One of the most famous plays in the German language is "Nathan the Wise" by Gotthold Lessing (1729—1781). The hero of the play is a venerable Jew, and the theme is humanism and religious tolerance. This great German classic was naturally banned under Hitler, but since then it has frequently been performed in both East and West Germany.

The theatre in the little West German town of Kleeve intended to produce "Nathan the Wise" next season: but the West German news magazine "Spiegel" reported on July 11th that "following intervention by Catholic clergy and Catholic educational authorities" the play would be removed from the theatre's repertoire.

Library Back

The Gotha Library, which contains about 300,000 volumes, is to be returned to the German Democratic Republic from the library of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad, where it has been kept intact since the end of the war.

Amongst the very valuable old books in the library are some printed in the 15th century — in the famous Gutenberg printing press — first editions of Cicero, and some works of Luther printed during his lifetime.

The most interesting of the books will be exhibited in Leningrad before their return.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

It is always a bit of a lottery when you go to see a new film made here in the German Democratic Republic: DEFA, the nationally-owned film company, turns out about 20 films a year; one or two of them are generally very good, most of them are middling, and a handful can only be described as very bad.

So it was with a certain amount of trepidation that I went on July 11th to the small DEFA projection hall just round the corner from my office in the centre of Berlin to see the press showing of another new film.

Crossed Fingers

If it had just been a run-of-the-mill film comedy, and it had turned out to be bad, I could have stood the shock; but this was an important film, and I was keeping my fingers crossed.

But I am glad to say that the film turned out to be very good, and I want to tell you about it. The title of the film is "Mich duerstet", which can be roughly rendered in English as "Thirst", and it is a very successful attempt to tell the story of the Spanish War of 1936-39.

There have been films about the Spanish War before, of course. Many readers will have seen the pre-war Hollywood film "Blockade", the script for which was written by progressive film writer John Howard Lawson, or the Hemingway film "For Whom the Bell Tolls" in which cowboy-star Gary Cooper was cast in the rather unlikely role of a member of the International Brigade. But these films, despite all their positive features, were views of the Spanish war seen from outside; the East German film company has attempted the far more difficult job of looking at the Spanish War from the inside, through the eyes of a Spanish peasant.

Simple Story

And in my opinion at least they have succeeded outstandingly. The story of the film is simple: the Popular Front victory at the Spanish general elections in February 1936 brings hope to the oppressed illiterate peasants of a poor village in southern Spain; they take matters into their own hands, and open the sluices of the landlord's reservoir to bring water to their parched fields. When the landlords, allied with German and Italian fascists strike back, the peasants

defend their village and their fields, and find that they too have allies in all parts of the world: the men of the International Brigade who come to help them in their fight.

The author of the script, Walter Gorrish, was himself a member of the International Brigade: a German anti-fascist who made his way to Spain to fight there against Hitler as well as against Franco. In Spain in 1937 a Spanish mother, whose child had been murdered by a bomb from a German plane of Hitler's Condor Legion said to him: "The Germans must be the children of wolves." Gorrish, soldier of the Spanish Republic, could reply: "I am a German too." Today, 19 years later, Gorrish has something more to add to his reply: "And now we have made a film in the other Germany, a film to support you in your new fight: this is a film directed against our fascist compatriots, and a memorial to your fight for liberty."

Documentary Background

The film "Thirst" is given a documentary background by the use of fascist newsreel shots showing German and Italian fascist troops and planes in action against the Republic, and newly discovered documentary film material made by cameramen on the Republican side of the front. These Republican films were captured by the nazis at the end of the Spanish war in 1939 and brought to Berlin, where they were recaptured by Soviet troops in 1945 and now made public for the first time.

An interesting minor point about this fine film, which I hope will be shown in many countries outside Germany, is the fact that a number of the bit actors who represent soldiers of the International Brigade are themselves representatives of a new and peaceful form of international solidarity. They are a few of the hundreds of students from all over the world who now study at the universities of the German Democratic Republic because they cannot get higher education in their own countries. A student from Nigeria, for instance, plays the role of a Negro International Brigader who, in one of the final scenes of the film, marches forward against the fascists shoulder to shoulder with a young German Brigader and a young Spanish peasant.

As an unpleasant footnote to this enthusiastic review I should like to

remind readers that cinemas in West Germany are at present showing a West German film which glorifies the bloody deeds of the nazi Condor Legion, and shows the International Brigade as degenerate riff-raff. And I can only repeat the question I put in an editorial article in the previous number of GERMAN REPORT: "Which side are you on?"

"High Treason"

In 1942, a nazi court passed a sentence of four years imprisonment for "high treason" on Ferdinand Falk, a former fighter in the International Brigade in Spain. After the war he appealed to the courts for this sentence, which he had served, to be struck from the record.

The "democratic" West German courts finally got around to his case, and now the Provincial Court in Dortmund has handed down its astounding judgment: the verdict of the nazi court was confirmed, but the sentence of four years (already served) was reduced to two years. The court expounded at great length the reasons for this ruling, but reduced to essentials they are as follows: Falk had worked in the underground to overthrow the nazi state; it is high treason to attempt to overthrow any state; high treason is severely punished in all civilised countries; therefore the nazi courts were quite right in sentencing him.

Side-Light

An interesting side-light on the state of mind of many people in West Germany was given at a press conference held in Bonn on July 9th by West German War Minister Theodor Blank. In reply to a question from a journalist, Herr Blank stated: "We do not intend to take any action against soldiers who deserted (from the Hitlerite Wehrmacht) in the closing stages of the last war." It is good to know, of course, that even the newly refurbished militarists in West Germany do not yet feel strong enough to persecute those German soldiers who did their little bit to shorten the war by deserting from Hitler's Wehrmacht; but it is a chilling thought that the question as to whether they would now be punished could be seriously asked and seriously answered in a nominally democratic state.